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**General and complete disarmament**

## Letter dated 14 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a copy of the text of the Statement on the impasse in nuclear disarmament, adopted by the Pugwash Council at its forty-eighth Conference on Science and World Affairs, held in Jurica, Querétaro, Mexico, from 29 September to 4 October 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have this note and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 71.

(*Signed*) Manuel **Tello**

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# Annex

[Original: English]

## Statement on the impasse in nuclear disarmament issued on 4 October 1998 by the Pugwash Council

Nuclear disarmament is at an impasse. START II remains unratified by the Russian Duma. United States-Russian Federation efforts to improve and expedite the management and disposition of fissile material stocks have slowed down. Both NATO and the Russian Federation keep the option open of being the first to use nuclear weapons. In the Middle East, no progress is being made towards the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The dispute over North Korea's nuclear programme has not yet been solved. The second preparatory meeting for the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was a failure.

Conscious of this impasse, we view the testing of nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan with alarm and frustration: alarm because of the potential risks of proliferation and nuclear war; frustration because of the continued refusal of the nuclear-weapon States to move unambiguously towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. What should have been a wake-up call to impress on all Governments that a radical change in approach to international security and nuclear weapon issues is needed passed without any such reconsideration. As much as we deplore the testing in South Asia, so far we find the reactions of the other nuclear powers to be grossly inadequate. Thirty years after the Non-Proliferation Treaty was opened for signature, they have not implemented the disarmament clause of the Treaty, and have shown no renewed willingness to do so.

However, noting the possession of nuclear weapons by two more States, we deem it important to draw them into the international arms control regime. While welcoming the announcements by India and Pakistan that testing has been put to a halt, we urge them to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty before the Conference to review this Treaty convenes next year, and to participate in good faith in the upcoming negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. We furthermore ask them not to help others to acquire nuclear weapons (Non-Proliferation Treaty, article I); to comply with the rules guiding international nuclear transactions (ibid., article III.2); and to dedicate themselves to nuclear disarmament (ibid., article VI). Such commitments would be tantamount to behaving "as if" they were parties to the Treaty. Successful conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty, involving full-scope safeguards also in the nuclear-weapon States, should give India and Pakistan access to nuclear technologies on a par with States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

To reduce the risk of unauthorized use and war by misunderstanding or accident, all nuclear weapons should be taken off alert status. Another important step would be to take all warheads off the delivery vehicles and store them in a different place. If the five nuclear-weapon powers would adopt safer postures of this kind, the argument that India and Pakistan should refrain from putting warheads on their delivery vehicles would become a strong and consistent one. We commend the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for being the first nuclear power to put its entire nuclear force effectively off alert, since it is now stated that it will take "days" to make its submarine-based systems ready for use.

While our ultimate goal is a nuclear-weapon-free world, as an intermediate step Pugwash advocates the negotiation of a treaty on no-first-use of nuclear weapons involving all States that possess such weapons, realizing that, in some cases, conventional force rearrangements and big power security guarantees may be necessary to achieve this.

Unambiguous no-first-use commitments, clearly expressed and reflected in military doctrines and force postures, would provide security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, and facilitate nuclear disarmament. For, if the role of nuclear weapons were limited to deterring their use by others, nobody would need them if no one had them. As a step in this direction – building on the long-standing Chinese and the recent Indian pledges of no-first-use – a trilateral no-first-use commitment between India, China and the Russian Federation is certainly desirable and may now be feasible. We furthermore urge NATO to adopt a no-first-use posture: its reasons for maintaining a first-use option are long gone.

In 1995, when the Non-Proliferation-Treaty was extended indefinitely, the five nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, there is little or nothing to suggest that they have in mind to live up to it. After a period of reductions and adaptations following the end of the cold war, the nuclear-weapon countries seem determined to keep enough nuclear weapons in their arsenals to inflict unacceptable damage, should they ever be used in combat. Actually, their policies seem to be based on the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons.

If this is what we are in for, the Non-Proliferation Treaty will be unsustainable. For the distinction between States permitted to have nuclear weapons and those proscribed from having them was meant to be a temporary, not a permanent, condition. If the United States of America, the mightiest power in the world, resolves that it needs nuclear weapons for its security, how can one expect States that have real cause to feel insecure to forgo such weapons? Today, multilateral talks or negotiations on nuclear disarmament are blocked. Neither the Conference on Disarmament nor the strengthened Non-Proliferation Treaty review process have been able to deal with these issues in a business-like fashion. This is intolerable.

We therefore urge all States having nuclear weapons to act in ways that are consistent with the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world, and to agree on specific steps that will lead to that goal.

To reduce the reliance on nuclear arms and pave the way for their elimination, we call on all political leaders of the world to adhere to the principles and goals of the United Nations Charter and promote a global collective security regime based on non-aggression, peaceful adjudication of disputes and the rule of law. We ask nations to act in ways that will reduce the motivations of others to develop, acquire and deploy nuclear weapons. As a matter of urgency, we ask the Security Council to reaffirm its presidential statement of 31 January 1992, declaring any proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to be a threat to international peace and security, and to do so in the form of a Security Council resolution.

We urge all Governments and non-governmental movements to mobilize their moral and political power to put nuclear disarmament back on track.